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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1994-1995 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1996

PART IV. THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

Section 5 - Other Countries in Central America

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.95-02224

IV.5 OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION

1. This chapter covers UNHCR activities in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

1. Beneficiary population

2. At 31 December 1994, there were 8,805 refugees in Belize, 24,600 in Costa Rica, 152 in El Salvador, 91 in Honduras, 300 in Nicaragua and almost 1,000 in Panama. Furthermore, in Belize, there are some 10,000 to 20,000 undocumented Central Americans reported to be in refugee-like situations. Of this number some 4,800 refugees are assisted by UNHCR. The majority of the refugees in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama are of Nicaraguan, Salvadoran and Guatemalan origin. There are also some refugees from the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and South America, especially in Belize, Costa Rica and Panama. Approximately 45 per cent of the refugees in these countries are female and over 10 per cent are children under five years old. Most of the refugees of Central American origin are farmers living in rural areas, while refugees from other regions tend to settle in urban areas.

2. Developments in 1994 and 1995

3. The promulgation in November 1992 of Executive Decree 21721-G allowing refugees to obtain residence status in Costa Rica enabled UNHCR to address their legal integration in 1993. By 31 May 1995 a total of 10,200 refugees had been granted resident status in Costa Rica. Even though the decree expired in November 1993 refugees continue to be able to apply for and obtain residence status. In addition, 335 refugees have obtained residence status in other countries in the region: 312 in Nicaragua, 12 in Honduras and 11 in Panama. The number of beneficiaries assisted to voluntarily repatriate from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama proved to be less than originally planned for 1994, which resulted in a corresponding reduction of budgetary requirements for 1995 and 1996.

4. Through the project of regional promotion and consolidation of durable solutions technical assistance was given to the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA)-convening countries, in preparation for the CIREFCA final event in June 1994. Furthermore, the project-funded activities aimed to consolidate the progress made within CIREFCA by organizing workshops to strengthen the local capacity to continue addressing the needs of uprooted populations, formulating post-CIREFCA follow-up and implementation mechanisms and establishing of post-CIREFCA support groups. Due to the late arrival of key staff the total of the budgeted funds were not used.

5. UNHCR and the Interamerican Institute of Human Rights jointly organized, under the auspices of the Government of Costa Rica, an international colloquium in San José to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration. The colloquium adopted the San José Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons, which addresses amongst other issues, harmonizing the legal

criteria and procedures to consolidate the durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration in Central America, Mexico and Belize, and continuing the voluntary repatriation of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico.

6. Durable solutions continued to be achieved and strengthened through quick impact projects (QIPs). In El Salvador, the QIP programme, which facilitated the integration of approximately 31,500 Salvadoran returnees, was completed by March 1995. In Belize, the QIP programme will continue through 1995 at a reduced level aimed at facilitating the socio-economic integration of 10,600 refugees and undocumented persons in refugee-like situations.

3. 1996 country programmes

(a) Objectives

7. In order to consolidate the significant achievements in identifying durable solutions in the region and to prevent future refugee flows, efforts will concentrate on increasing awareness of UNHCR's protection mandate, promoting respect for human rights and institution-building. These efforts will include the promotion and support of mechanisms to consolidate durable solutions, i.e. reintegrating returnees, allowing refugees to obtain residence in countries of asylum, establishing refugee determination procedures in countries where they are still lacking, and disseminating information on human rights as well as the fundamental obligations of States.

8. As durable solutions have been identified for the vast majority of refugees in previous years, material assistance provided to refugees through local settlement and repatriation programmes in Costa Rica, El Salvador Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama has been considerably reduced in 1994. Nevertheless, an estimated 4,535 refugees will benefit from subsistence grants, health coverage, legal protection and education: approximately 1,200 in Belize, 1,900 in Costa Rica, 140 in El Salvador, 50 in Honduras, 445 in Nicaragua and 800 in Panama. Of this total, approximately 65 per cent will be of Central American origin. It is expected that approximately 205 new arrivals will require immediate attention for a three-month period, and 50 vulnerable cases will continue to require a subsistence allowance pending a durable solution.

9. Support for the voluntary repatriation of 330 refugees in the region has been planned in 1996: refugees are expected to repatriate to various countries from Belize (100), Costa Rica (150), El Salvador (10), Honduras (20), Nicaragua (20), and Panama (30).

10. In Belize there is still a need to stabilize and consolidate the integration of refugees who do not opt to repatriate by promoting community-based socio-economic activities through QIPs. The QIP programme will continue in a reduced form through 1996.

11. A regional project designed to promote preventive protection and consolidate the identification of durable solutions in the region will continue throughout 1996. The project will include activities designed to improve the awareness of international refugee law and human rights law; strengthen UNHCR's role as a catalyst for the promotion of rights of refugees, returnees, and other uprooted persons through dissemination of information on network including the participation of United Nations agencies, government institutions and NGOs;

establish refugee determination procedures in those countries still lacking such mechanisms (El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua); train government officials in the application of status determination procedures; and support mechanisms to allow for the obtention of residence status for refugees who choose to remain in Central American countries of asylum.

12. A total of 21 university students (17 in Costa Rica, two in Panama, one in Honduras and one in El Salvador) will benefit from the German Albert Einstein Refugee Academic Initiative (DAFI) scholarship programme in 1996, the majority from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Peru and Haiti.

13. The handover of a trust fund managed by UNHCR to the Government of Costa Rica in 1995 will allow for the continuation of productive credit schemes, facilitating the integration and self-sufficiency of refugees in Costa Rica.

(b) Proposed budgets for 1996

14. In Belize the budgetary requirements for Special Programmes have been reduced as the requirements have been included under General Programmes.

15. Budgetary requirements for the regional projects have been reduced for voluntary repatriation but slightly raised for regional promotion and consolidation of durable solutions.

(c) Implementing partners

16. In Costa Rica, Consultores y Asesores Internacionales will implement project activities related to the local integration of refugees and provide legal counselling and follow-up on all legal aspects related to the residence status of refugees in each respective country, while Rodriguez y Zamora SRL will administer arrangements with support staff to monitor the local integration process. In Panama, the UNHCR programme is implemented by the Government through its Ministry of Government and Justice, which in turn has delegated responsibility to the National Office for Refugees (ONPAR). Operations in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras are covered by regional projects administered by the Regional Office in Costa Rica.

17. In Belize the local NGO Help for Progress is the new implementing partner for the QIP programme, as the International Rescue Committee withdrew from Belize in early 1995. The two other major implementing partners are the Government's Refugee Department, which carries out status determination, and the Belize Council of Churches, which handles material assistance and economic integration activities including education, training, vocational skills development and income-generating projects to promote self sufficiency. Finally, the Human Rights Commission of Belize is involved in human rights-related training of refugees and community leaders.

18. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) makes international travel arrangements for refugees repatriating to countries in the region.

(d) Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

19. Variations due to changes in budget parameters are not discussed in the subsequent analysis (Overview of UNHCR Activities, Part I (A/AC.96/845) refers).

(i) **1994 expenditure (all sources of funds)**

20. The 1994 expenditure was not significantly different from revised estimates.

(ii) **Revised 1995 requirements (all sources of funds)**

21. The revised 1995 requirements do not vary significantly from initial estimates.

(iii) **Initial 1996 requirements (all sources of funds)**

22. The 1996 requirements are slightly lower than in the 1995 revised estimates. This is due to the anticipated move of the Nicaragua office to th UNDP premises and to the phasing down of UNHCR's presence in El Salvador duri 1995.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1994	1995			1996	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1994 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION		SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
				GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)	
0.3 a/	–	–		CARE AND MAINTENANCE	–
160.0	465.3	433.3	Regional Project	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	273.4
				LOCAL SETTLEMENT	
585.2 c/	456.6	456.6	Belize		806.6
–	–	–	Nicaragua		–
162.5	–	–	Panama		–
259.8	891.8	1,103.2	Regional Project		1,233.7
574.0 b/	–	–	Costa Rica		–
				RESETTLEMENT	
0.8 a/	–	–	El Salvador		–
0.5 a/	–	–	Nicaragua		–
				PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	
444.5	386.8	355.7	Belize		447.9
838.3	703.0	793.6	Costa Rica		769.9
–	–	111.8	El Salvador		174.8
59.1	126.1	95.6	Nicaragua		87.9
69.6	106.1	86.7	Honduras		82.4
3,154.6	3,135.7	3,436.5		SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	3,876.6
				ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	
27.2	39.3	37.3	Belize		36.1
194.6	209.5	219.6	Costa Rica		137.3
–	–	18.8	El Salvador		32.7
3,376.4	**3,384.5**	**3,712.2**		**TOTAL (1)**	**4,082.7**
				SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)	
				EDUCATION ACCOUNT	
–	11.4	–	Costa Rica		–
0.6	–	–	Honduras		–
				OTHER TRUST FUNDS	
1.8	–	–	Nicaragua	QUICK IMPACT PROGRAMME	–
1,264.8	–	–	El Salvador	Assistance to returnees in El Salvador	–
1,517.2	840.0	840.0	Belize		–
415.0	–	–	Costa Rica	CIREFCA/PRODERE	–
3.1	–	–	Honduras		–
2.5	–	–	Panama		–
–	–	23.0	Regional Project		23.0
				PROGRAMME DELIVERY	
95.0	25.9	100.0	Belize	See Overview Tables (Part II)	–
52.3	17.3	–	Costa Rica		–
36.0	4.0	–	Nicaragua		–
266.2	268.2	133.5	El Salvador		–
				ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT Junior Professional Officer	
38.5	49.8	18.8	El Salvador	See Overview Tables (Part II)	–
103.3	124	56.5	Belize		56.5
115.5	137.0	22.5	El Salvador		–
84.6	34.1	45.0	Costa Rica		45.0
3,996.4	**1,511.7**	**1,239.3**		**TOTAL (2)**	**124.5**
7,372.8	**4,896.2**	**4,951.5**		**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**4,207.2**

a/ obligation incurred against Other Programmes
b/ of which US$ 2.722 incurred against Other Programmes
c/ of which US$ 1.430 incurred against Other Programmes